

F/V Handful

Capt. Leonard Daniels

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February 12, 2015

To Whom It May Concern within the Mid-Atlantic Council:

We are Captains Leonard Daniels and Buddy Coppersmith, owners of the commercial fishing vessels Handful and Emily Shay, respectively, of North Carolina. We are writing this letter after acquiring an email dated January 30, 2015 to Director David Saveikis regarding your concern for the blueline tile fishery in the Mid-Atlantic region. We would like to address these concerns with the intention of working with the Mid-Atlantic Council in order to establish a solution that is beneficial for your council, the fishermen that utilize this resource for their livelihood, and the sustainability of the blueline tilefish resource.

In reading your email, it became apparent that your primary concern for the blueline tilefish lies in the profound lack of data for this fishery, which you termed a "data-poor fishery." According to the Magnuson Stevens Act 101-627 (8), "The collection of reliable data is essential to the effective conservation, management, and scientific understanding of the fishery resources of the United States." Having personally fished this species within the jurisdiction of the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic Council, we can attest that the collection of data is entirely necessary to understanding this resource. It would be a massive, gross injustice to this species, the fishermen, and the commercial economy which has worked for over a decade to establish a lucrative market for this fishery to completely undermine this resource based on your lack of effort regarding your responsibility for collecting data. Furthermore, to restrict this valuable resource to a mere 300 pound trip limit negates the existence of this fishery as a resource, as no fishermen, recreational or commercial, would travel such a distance to fish for this species. According to your council's purpose, it is of significant importance for you to manage resources, rather than terminate them. For this reason, we are requesting that you attempt to work with us, the fishermen, in order to better collect data to ensure the future of this fishery, including the markets, buyers, enterprises, and businesses that make this a profitable resource.

In the email to Director Saveikis, the Mid-Atlantic Council reported that the latest SEDAR assessment (SEDAR 32, 2013) suggested that this species may be overfished. When the South Atlantic Council made their decision to drastically reduce the Annual Catch Limit for the fishermen in 2014 this was reportedly a major influence in their decision. It was only because of a collection of data that the South Atlantic was able to justify a decision of this astronomical proportion, as it caused devastating repercussions to our livelihood, the market, and the coastal businesses that purchase tilefish for retail and consumption in restaurants. Although this decision was devastating, we understand that it was an informed decision based on the intelligent collection of data for several years. To make a similar decision with only one assessment of an

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entirely different stock of fish than those we have fished in New Jersey is an appalling injustice to the fishermen and an insulting mismanagement of the resource of tilefish available.

In light of our shared concerns, we would like to offer our assistance in resolving the lack of data for this fishery before any catastrophic decisions are made. Four commercial boats, including our own, successfully fished for this species last summer in a 10 mile radius. Based on our experience, we have reason to believe that this is a separate stock of fish than those we have caught within the South Atlantic Council jurisdiction, and therefore have no connection to the sustainability or availability of those other fish. Additionally, we suspect that there are more blueline tilefish further north of the area we have been fishing. Rather than end this fishery, we would be willing to assist you in collecting data to illustrate that this sustainable fishery is a viable resource. We would like to propose that boats that have a history of landings north of Norfolk Canyon be allowed to fish for blueline tile under the premise that we will be assisting you in collecting data to demonstrate the sustainability of this fishery.

We have read the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan available by way of the Mid-Atlantic Council's website and understand that it is of significant importance to your committee in your vision for the future that you communicate with and engage those stakeholders who have an invested interest in the fishing industry, of which we would identify specifically with the commercial sector. We also recognize that one of your concerns was to, "Ensure that the Council's management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific data that are analyzed and modeled in a manner that improves management performance and build stakeholder confidence." Should the Council proceed with restricting the blueline tile fishery without the collection of any reasonable scientific data, it would certainly be impossible to accomplish this goal of the Council's. We believe that all of these goals for communicating and engaging stakeholders as well as the essential necessity of collecting data in order to properly manage the fishery and instill confidence in the stakeholders would be achieved and attained through our working together for the common goal of ensuring the future of the blueline tile fishery.

We appreciate your attention and consideration in this matter. We sincerely hope that our efforts will be met with your willingness to work with us for the common goals of all that are involved in this vital resource.

Sincerely,

*Leonard Daniels*      *Buddy Coppersmith*

Capt. Leonard Daniels, Capt. Buddy Coppersmith